Why It's Smart to Have Selfish Employees

By Moe Glenner

There is a common misconception that a selfish person makes for an unmanageable employee—perhaps this person will destroy the team dynamic that we all strive for within our organizations? But organizations that don't pay positive attention to me-oriented employees miss the opportunity to gain highly self-motivated team members who can significantly benefit the organization.

Selfish employees can be the hardest-working team members because they seek satisfaction of their personal drivers. While team-oriented employees operate for the greater good, they ignore their own personal drivers, and as a result, often lose motivation.

Selfish employees remain focused on attaining their personal goals. A manager can harness this selfish motivation by providing a path for the employee to reach his or her goals.

An organization relies on the diverse input from its members and the direction of its leaders. As a leader, one of your tasks is to build a motivated team. This is not a static task, but rather a continuing activity. Progressive leaders understand that motivation is created and harnessed through careful delivery of personal drivers. In other words, being able to deliver on each team member's personal return on investment.

A bargain must be made with each team member. In exchange for their personal investment, manifested by cooperation, participation and contribution, you will provide to them a personal return. For some, it may be public recognition, enhanced status within the company, promotion opportunities, increased compensation or even just an easier way to accomplish everyday tasks. Leaders must be able to deliver on these returns.

By finding the personal return on investment of your team members, communicating to them the path for achieving them, and then delivering on your end of the bargain, a team of selfish employees can be an organization's best friend and powerful tool for continued success.

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